

**Water Quality Study of Bays in Coastal Mississippi
Quality Assurance Study Plan
Peer Review Charge**

Background

The US-EPA, Region 4 Science & Ecosystem Support Division (SESD), Ecological Assessment Branch (EAB) has been requested by the Region 4 Deputy Regional Administrator (DRA) to have the “Water Quality Study of Bays in Coastal Mississippi” Quality Assurance Study Plan (QAPP) peer reviewed by appropriate members of EPA’s Science Advisory Board (SAB).

This water quality study is being conducted at the request of, and with participation of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. EAB has a considerable degree of experience in the water bodies that are included in the study. The branch has conducted numerous comprehensive water quality studies in each of the rivers and bays along the Mississippi coast during the past two decades, with the MDEQ participating in most of those studies. The sampling/sample handling procedures and analytical methods used by SESD are clearly outlined in the referenced Branch Quality Assurance Manuals and Standard Operating Procedures. These procedures have not only been used for many scientific data collection activities, but have also served as the basis for sample collection methods in highly scrutinized civil and criminal proceedings.

The QAPP being submitted provides sufficient detail to meet the intent of QA/R-5 (see graded approach in section 1.3), and we believe that it contains the information needed with regard to the planning, implementation and assessment phases of the study. All SAB comments will be carefully considered and appropriate changes to the QAPP will be made following receipt of the SAB review.

Charge to the SAB

In accordance with the agency’s Peer Review Policy, EAB is requesting SAB technical input on the following areas in the QAPP.

- Project objectives – are they clearly stated?
- Sampling design – will it provide the data needed to meet the stated objectives?